

CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
December 6, 2000 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of October 25 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the October 25, 2000, CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

The proposed schedule for 2001 CALFED Ops meetings was presented. The meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of the month for January and February to avoid a conflict with the Asilomar conference at the end of February. Subsequent meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of the month through October. As in the past, the Ops Group will not meet in November and will meet the first Wednesday of December.

Carl Torgersen, Chief of DWR's Operations Control Office, was announced as Larry Gage's replacement as co-chair.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. Proposed schedule for 2001 meetings, DWR, Alan Ng
2. Fall/Winter Juvenile Salmon Decision Process (Oct 1 – Jan 31),
Revised November 14, 2000, USFWS, Marty Kjelson
3. Chart 2 – Salmon Protection Decision Process, November 16, 2000, USFWS,
Marty Kjelson
4. Briefing Paper on Spring Head of Old River Barrier, December 6, 2000, DWR,
Mark Holderman
5. USGS 1999 California Hydrologic Data Report for San Joaquin River near
Vernalis, DWR, Mark Holderman
6. Draft EWA Asset Acquisition Strategy, December 6, 2000, DWR,
Leo Winternitz
7. TBI/ED Letter, Re: Decision procedure for implementation of EWA actions,
November 20, 2000, CCWD, David Briggs
8. RST catch of yearling spring-run chinook salmon – fall 2000, DFG, Jim White
9. CALFED Operations Briefing Package, December 6, 2000, DWR, John
Leahigh
10. Draft 90% Forecast, November 24, 2000, USBR, Paul Fujitani
11. SJRA and Fall 2000 Water Transfer – revised 10/31/00, December 6, 2000,
USFWS, Roger Guinee
12. Revised Draft Delta Export Reductions and Upstream River Releases,
November 27, 2000, USFWS, Roger Guinee

13. Results from Fall Midwater Trawl Survey, December 6, 2000, DFG, Jim White
14. Winter-run Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, and Spring-run Chinook Update, December 6, 2000, NMFS, Bruce Oppenheim

SWRCB

The SWRCB issued a Public Notice on November 16, 2000, advising parties to the Bay-Delta Water Rights Hearing that there would be a workshop on January 11, 2001 to discuss: 1) the schedule for resumption of Phase 8 and 2) the status of negotiations between export and upstream interests to resolve significant Phase 8 issues. Written submittals are due Friday, January 5 at 4 PM.

In September 2000, the projects notified the SWRCB that the export/inflow ratio was inadvertently exceeded on September 21 and 22. The SWRCB responded by a letter dated November 17 that the exceedance represented an unauthorized diversion of water. DWR was given the option of either releasing from storage an equivalent amount of water or bypassing an equivalent amount of water in the Delta. The action should come at a time beneficial to fish and be carried out in consultation with the DFG. Alternatively, the SWRCB could elect to impose an administrative civil liability on DWR of up to \$1,000. The SWRCB had not yet received a response from the projects.

The SWRCB has received several communications from the South Delta Water Agency regarding water level problems in the southern Delta. When the problems occurred, there was no use of the Joint Point of Diversion by the projects. Water was being pumped at the Banks Pumping plant at that time pursuant to the transfer from Merced Irrigation District to the Bureau of Reclamation. There is no requirement for MID to carry out the water level forecasting and notification in the JPOD water level response plan. SDWA did not object to the transfer based upon potential injury to water levels, nor did SDWA petition for reconsideration of the SWRCB order approving the transfer.

The SWRCB held a special Board meeting on December 4, 2000, to receive public comment and to consider the draft Yuba River decision. The decision establishes significantly higher instream flow requirements on the lower Yuba and addresses river temperature and fish entrainment issues. Many parties expressed strong opposition to the draft decision at the Board meeting. Public comment will continue on January 11, 2001, and a decision is scheduled for the February 15 Board meeting.

Delta Cross Channel Gate Fall Experiment

The experiment has been getting good results and data are still being gathered. The DCC Project Work Team will prepare a report by February and present it at the IEP Asilomar conference during the last week in February. Members of the DCC PWT have cautioned against drawing conclusions from the preliminary data until all of the analyses have been completed. However, if a condition arises whereby Reclamation may need to consider operating the gates for water quality, the data could be made available to the DAT sooner. Follow up experiments will be planned.

Juvenile Salmon Protection Plan

Refinements have been made to the charts presented at the last CALFED Ops meeting in October.

Temporary Barriers

The Fall HOR barrier has been breached and is being removed this week. Given the experience with the HOR barrier in spring 2000, and the current rating curve information for Vernalis, DWR does not recommend a 7,000 cfs Vernalis flow target for VAMP while the HOR barrier is in place.

Head of Old River – 7,000 cfs Design Flow Issue

Concern was expressed about reducing flows to allow for installation and operation of a barrier. The Management Agencies and the Project Agencies need to become more engaged in this issue. A higher priority needs to be given to installing a permanent structure sooner. The structure is constrained to 10 feet MSL to prevent overtopping of the levees. This issue will be added to the WOMT meeting after the next one. Mike Ford will take the lead preparing a paper on the issue with help from Dan Fults and Bruce Herbold.

South Delta Dredging

DWR received an extension from the fishery agencies for completing the South Delta dredging project. The work along Grantline Canal is completed. Four different dredges have been used on the project as each had to replace its successor due to some mechanical failure. Because very little dredging is done in

the Delta, the fourth dredge had to be brought in from Louisiana. Dredging is anticipated to be completed by December 15.

Environmental Water Account Implementation

A table showing the EWA asset acquisition strategy under wet and dry conditions was distributed and discussed.

OFF and DAT Update

Comments were made on the Juvenile Salmon Protection Plan. A letter, concerning decision procedure for implementation of EWA actions, from The Bay Institute and Environmental Defense to the USFWS, NMFS, and DFG was presented. A graph of the rotary screw trap catch of yearling spring-run chinook salmon for the fall of 2000 was presented. The Delta Cross Channel gates have been opened since November 8. On Friday, December 8, the second group of late fall-run juvenile salmon will be released.

OPERATIONS

CVP/SWP Operations Status:

The current State and Federal reservoir levels and export rates were presented as per the CALFED Operations Briefing Package handout. Because of water quality concerns, CVP and SWP had cut back on pumping, but now have resumed at previous levels. EPA proposed a partial closure of the Delta Cross Channel gates for 3 days, but the USBR is not comfortable with this operation because of current water quality and the energy concerns. Reclamation's share of San Luis should fill by the end of December. The SWP share may not be filled this year if it remains dry. So far this water year, conditions are dry, but it is still early in the season. Initial allocations of 40% were announced for State water contractors. Minimum Delta outflow requirement for January is 4500 cfs, but can increase to 6000 cfs if the December 8RI is greater than 800 taf. Under Stage 3, California ISO can have the SWP forego pumping to help ease the energy crisis and Reclamation may drop a unit. An outage is scheduled for next week at Banks Pumping Plant to remove the mitten crab K-rails and to work on Skinner Fish Facility.

Reclamation completed payback of 70 taf to the SWP on November 30 for impacts associated with export curtailments occurring in 1999.

Delta Operations Criteria:

A table of 90% forecast data summarizing EWA assets, expenditures, and balances, as well as b(2) actions was presented and discussed.

Operations Plan:

A graph showing SJRA and fall 2000 water transfer for October through December was presented. A draft handout detailing Delta export reductions and upstream river releases was distributed and discussed.

Fishery Status

Salmon: NMFS provided a handout detailing the status of winter-run chinook salmon, steelhead and spring-run chinook. The winter-run salmon have been late this year. A release of surrogates is scheduled for Friday. No spring run and only one steelhead have been observed so far. The fish may be waiting for rain start them moving down to the Delta.

Splittail: Numbers are low, but it is still early.

Delta Smelt: Numbers are low, but it is still early.

Agenda items for Next Meeting . . . January 17, 2000

HOR Barrier Status
Weather Prediction by Bill Mork
Delta Cross Channel Gate Fall Experiment Update